

Appendix G
Chronology of Construction
And Historic Photographs

Stacy E. Spies,
Architectural Historian

CHRONOLOGY OF CONSTRUCTION AND SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

All Souls Church, First Unitarian Society of Plainfield, New Jersey

May 12, 1889. First Unitarian Society of Plainfield organized and holds first service.

Jan. 27, 1890. Building Committee appointed to secure subscriptions for new building.

Ca. 1890. Congregant and former Mayor of Plainfield Job Male purchased 75'x100' Park Avenue lot for the society.

Oct. 13, 1890. Building Committee of 5 members appointed. Hobart Clark (minister 1890-1896) "having had an opportunity to study English cathedrals during his successful pastorate at Cardiff, Wales, lent his aid to the consultations and Mr. [David] Pond proved an efficient chairman."

Jan. 12, 1891. Building Committee reported "that the land had been deeded to the society by Mr. Male with the provision that it should never be mortgaged." "With its lot secured, the society expects to erect thereupon a suitable and attractive stone church, at a cost of \$10,000 to \$12,000."

February 4, 1891. Congregation voted to build a stone structure not to cost more than \$10,500 for the building alone or not more than \$12,500 including pews, heating plant, furniture and all other items.

May 28, 1891. Oscar Schutte Teale chosen as architect. The building committee, having held a number of meetings, and after consultations with architects and the society, "finally submitted to the society at a meeting ... a plan and elevation in stone, designed by Oscar S. Teale."

August 1891. Building Committee distributes leaflet that outlines building plans to congregation. Cover of leaflet contains first, most elaborate Teale drawing. "All that is now required to assure the rapid and permanent establishment of a strong and influential Society in a city with many liberal influences, but no other liberal church, is the speedy erection of an attractive and convenient building for the various activities."

September 28, 1891. Changes in architectural plans for economy. Contract signed with Teale. "The changes do not affect the ground plan materially except that the rear extension for the pulpit and organ is omitted, and the pulpit will project further into the church. There will still be an abundance of seating capacity for the immediate future, and the extension can be added when the Society is larger. The changes in the exterior consist in omitting the cut stone projection over the front window, shortening the towers, omitting the flying buttresses and substituting dormer windows in the clear story for those first shown. There have been some changes also in the interior finish and it has been decided to use field stone for the walls." The mason chosen is I.W. Pangborn. The carpenter chosen is John Abbott.

October 2, 1891. Ground broken.

Nov. 8, 1891. Cornerstone laid.

April 8, 1892. All Souls Church construction completed. Architect Teale certified that structure complete. Deed “placed on record.” Total cost of church building, exclusive of the land was \$12,487. Land Valued at \$5,000.

May 11, 1892. All Souls Church building dedicated by First Unitarian Society of Plainfield. The semi-circular pews were arranged in an amphitheater form, with two broad aisles one on either side. The birch pews accommodated 260 people. In the rear of the church, a large open area with moveable chairs was to be used by the Sunday school and could accommodate 140 people. It was intended that the space would be shut off from the sanctuary by folding doors. The doors were never installed and a large curtain divided the space. A Ladies’ Parlor, now the minister’s office, was provided and a kitchen was located in the basement beneath the parlor.

As described in local newspapers, the building was constructed of stone, and “finished with a rock face, which produces a pleasing effect in the changing lights and shadows falling upon it. ... The front of the building is forty feet from the street and has a total width of 62 feet. The main entrance [is] through the arch ... which is part of an artistic porch that merges gracefully with the main walls of the building. Another entrance is at the side... The outer doors at both entrances are of oak. They open into ample vestibules, in each of which are two sets of swinging double doors, one leading into the auditorium, and the other into the Sunday School room. As the last statement indicates, the interior is arranged to serve a double purpose. The front part is to be used by the Sunday School, the room being 31 feet wide by 24 feet deep. It is arranged so as to become part of the main room, when desired. The auditorium is 49 feet wide and 35 feet deep, with pews made in a semi-circular form.... A ladies’ parlor is provided in the octagonal portion of the building; and below it is a kitchen with such conveniences as a connection with the city water mains, a dumb-waiter, and the like. The building is warmed by a hot-air furnace, and is lighted by gas. The wood-work throughout is of pine, finished in oil. The pews and pulpit furniture are made of birch with a cabinet finish.” The “little yellow rococo pulpit” described by Alson Robinson in 1939 is no longer in the possession of the Society.

June 1901. Pipe organ installed. Manufactured by Hook & Hastings Co., Kendal Green, Massachusetts. The total cost including installation was \$1,500.

Spring 1922. “...the first talk of [a parish house] started, and it was discussed by the trustees at three meetings during the spring. On April 28, 1922, a regular Parish House committee was appointed by the president of the Society.”

September 1922. Friend of FUSP and Architect J.T. Tubby of Westfield submitted sketches for a C-shaped addition that “seemed desirable.” “The proposed building is adequate for present needs and may be enlarged in accordance with future demands. The building is approximately 68 feet in length by 24 feet in width. There are rooms [which] may be adapted for the use of separate classes; an ample auditorium with stage for concerts and dramatics; provision for the needs of the [Womens’] Alliance; a light, modern kitchen. Additional room, useful for out-door meetings and numerous other activities is provided in the courtyard.” The courtyard was to be located within the “C” along the south elevation and contained a design for an outdoor pulpit. The estimated cost of \$20,000 was more than could be raised at that time.

September 1922 to September 1923. Plans were simplified and new construction bids received.

August 1924. “Changes in the surrounding property during August 1924 made a complete change in plans necessary before building the [Parish] house.” During this time, the neighboring Truell House at the northwest intersection of Park Avenue and 9th Street was replaced by the construction of the much larger apartment building now present, making an outdoor courtyard and worship space undesirable.

Dec. 1924. J.T. Tubby’s architectural plans for “Parish House” completed.

December 8, 1924. Construction contract awarded to Anthony Albert of Scotch Plains and work started immediately.

January 1925. Cornerstone laid for Parish Hall.

June 7, 1925. Parish Hall dedicated. Parish Hall designed for classrooms, a church office and minister’s room. A large room was designed to accommodate plays and social events.

May 1926. Horace Stevens accepted the chairmanship of a committee to “redecorate” the sanctuary. The committee was responsible for raising funds and preparing the plans.

Ca. 1927. Proposed plans to redecorate Sanctuary interior. At the annual meeting of the society, it was voted to authorize the All Souls Decorating Fund Committee to raise \$6,500 to “carry out the plans proposed.” “The changes contemplated consist briefly of a rearrangement of the pews to fill in the main body of the church, a simplification of the interior to bring it into accord with the Gothic exterior, the lowering of the pulpit platform, and other changes at this point, including a permanent enclosure at the organ, a thorough overhauling and cleaning of the organ itself, and a complete redecoration of the walls and ceiling of the church auditorium with the adjacent lobbies. ...All of this work will be done under the personal supervision of our fellow member, the well known architect Mr. Harry Keith White.”

1929. Architect’s plans for Sanctuary interior completed. Although the word “redecorating” was consistently used by the committee, White’s designs for the interior of the sanctuary, dated 1929, involve a more extensive reworking of the sanctuary interior than the description “redecorating” implies. Teale’s lighter finishes on the ceilings, walls and pews, semi-circular forms, and open, auditorium plan were darkened and the space enclosed, bringing the sanctuary’s design more in line with the “Gothic” interior created by J.T. Tubby for the Parish Hall interior.

- The semi-circular pew layout, with open space for Sunday school classes at the east end of the sanctuary was removed and replaced by two columns of straight pews. The semi-circular layout extended along the aisles at the north and south walls of the church, with the pews extending beyond the columns. This new orientation narrowed the space with pews filling only the center space. The north and south spaces became the existing galleries.
- The vestibules originally had two sets of doors: 1 set led to the sanctuary and 1 set led to the Sunday school space at the back of the sanctuary. The Sunday school doors were removed at this time and the openings covered with plaster.

- The slender compound wood columns that extended along the north and south walls were encased with stuccoed constructions. The semi-circular arches were altered to pointed arches.
- The semicircular pulpit centered on the west wall of the Sanctuary was removed. A new pulpit platform, rectangular in plan and reached by three steps, is installed in its place. The new pulpit, a baptismal font given by the First Unitarian Society in Newton, Massachusetts, is placed at the southeast corner of the platform. The open screen of the font was infilled with oak panels.
- On the ceiling, which originally featured woodwork outlining the vaulted roof, half-timbering was installed that resembled the Parish Hall. The spaces between the half-timbering were painted a dark color. The overall effect was a much darker space. The spaces have since been painted a lighter color.
- The pews were disassembled. The birch pew ends were re-used and attached to new straight oak pew backs and seats. Pew cushions were also cut and reworked.
- Existing overhead light fixtures were reused. New sconces with a serpentine motif were installed in the galleries.

October 19, 1930. Member Jonas Lie dedicates mural he painted above the pulpit.

October 13, 1935. New, overhauled organ dedicated.

Fall 1943. Choir platform raised and expanded to its present position.

1943-1944. Cateau deLeeuw arranges for screen to be added to top of pulpit to block reading light.

June 8, 1947. Robinson window dedicated for Rev. Alson Robinson (minister 1919-1944). The design committee was led by Cateau deLeeuw. Oliver Smith of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, a well-known stained glass artist who worked in medieval forms, created the window.

December 1948. Parish Hall expanded to the south to contain present-day office and restrooms. Doors to current office were originally exterior doors.

April 26, 1953. Stevens Window dedicated in memory of Horace Stevens. Riva Helfond Barrett, chairperson of the arts committee, designed the window. Window was also created by Oliver Smith of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania.

March 18, 1956. At a meeting of the congregation, Board of Trustees entrusted with taking steps toward the acquisition of additional property and eventual erection of a building to house the Church school. Since 1946, religious education enrollment had more than tripled and the number of classes had doubled. Attendance at the church was 50 percent higher than in 1951.

November 1956. Stevens Wing plans "in formative stages." The wing will include Sunday School classrooms, a meeting room, two nursery rooms, and rooms for older children. Architect is Harry K. White. White is also a member of the congregation.

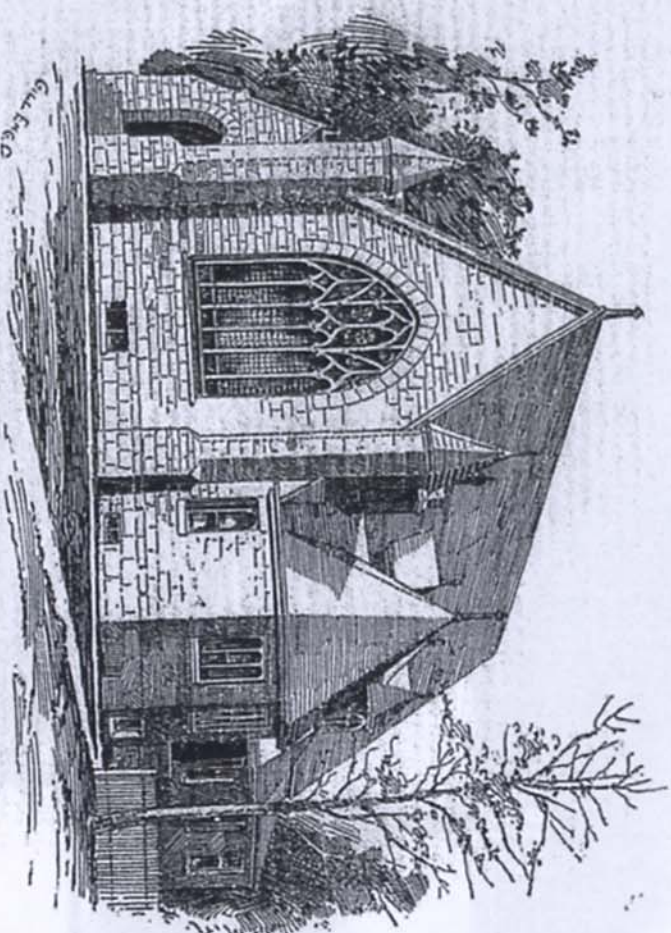
Spring 1957. Stevens Wing construction begins at a cost of \$100,000. Parking will be located on site for the first time.

Fall of 1974. A three-year period of fundraising took place to refurbish the Society building. The kitchen, yard, the vestibule, and Parish Hall were refurbished.

May 22, 1977. Powell Terrace dedicated. The porch at the parish hall entrance was given in memory of Priscilla S. Powell by her family and friends. The iron railing is a gift from Ruth Tubby and the planters incorporated adjacent to the porch are the gift of children enrolled in the religious education classes.

August 1981. An asphalt roof was installed over the Sanctuary, replacing the original slate roof.

DEDICATION SERVICES
OF
All Souls' Church.



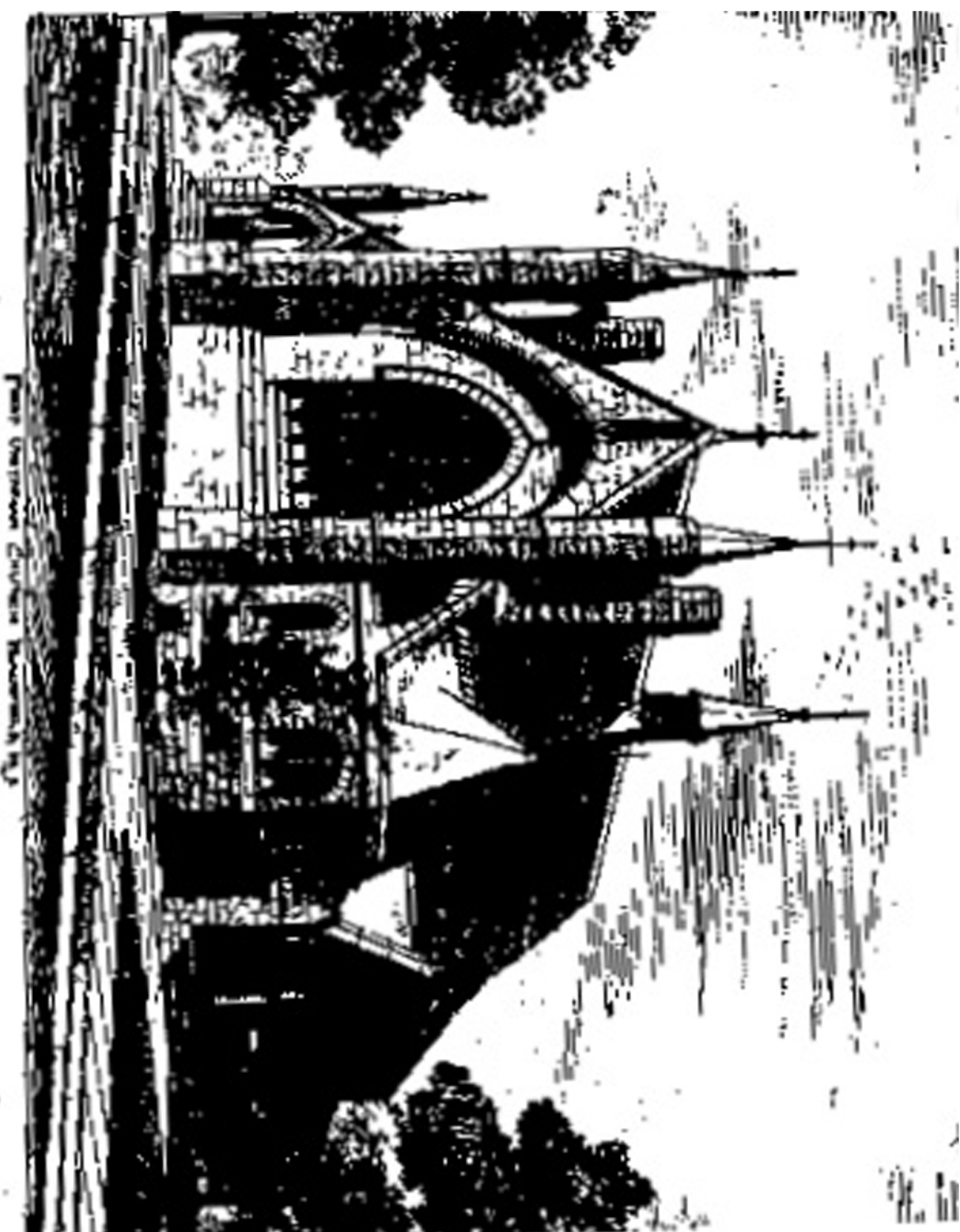
Spack Avenue, near Seventh Street,

By the First Unitarian Society

OF PLAINFIELD,

Wednesday Evening, May 11, 1892,

AT 8 O'CLOCK.



FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY,

PLAINFIELD, N. J.



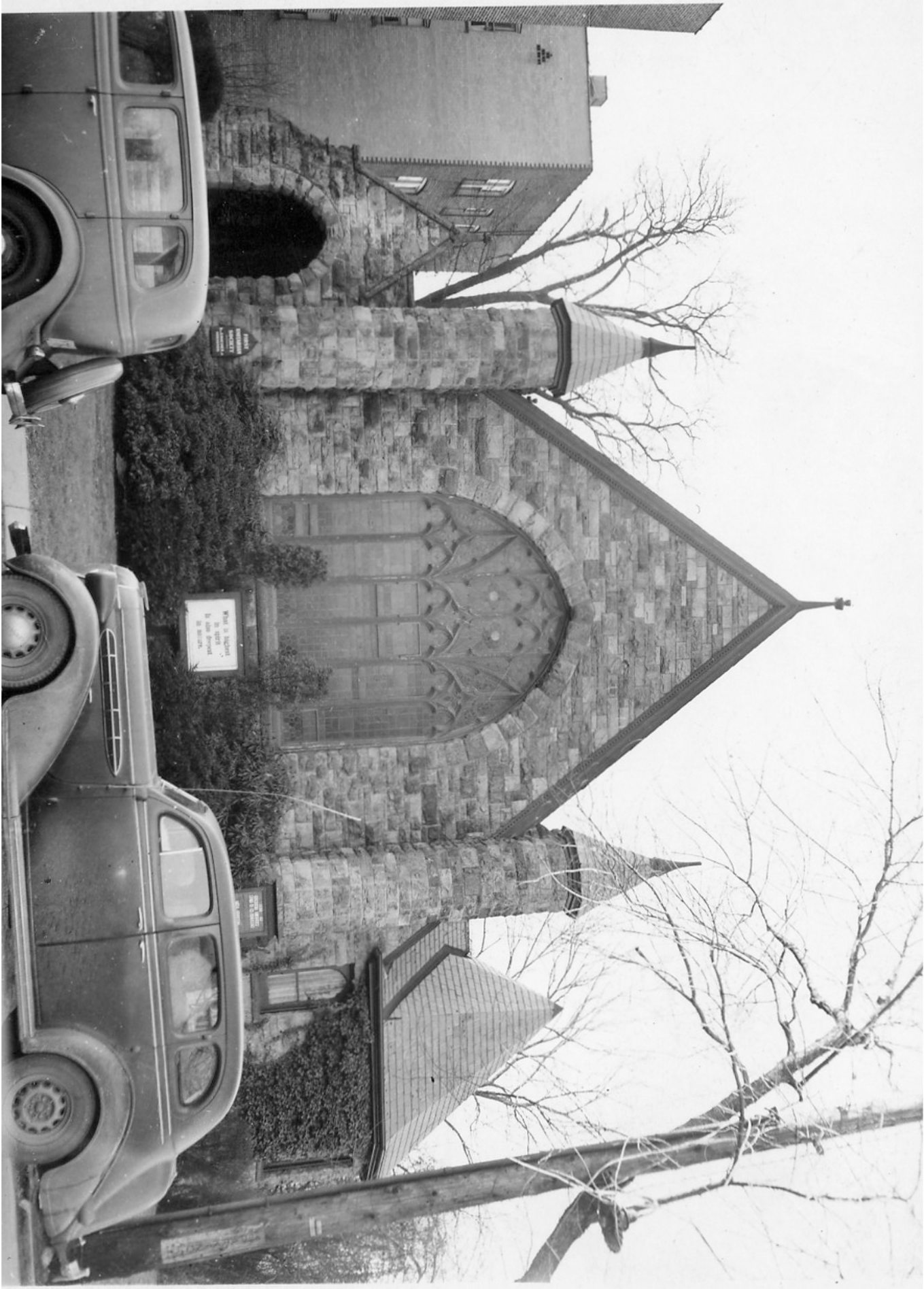
03-Pre1925 Church Sou#19B51.jpg



04-1925 Parish Hall C#2C9BF.jpg



05-1932 Park Avenue.jpg



06-1940s Park Avenue.jpg

07-Pre1947 Church Sou#2C9BB.jpg



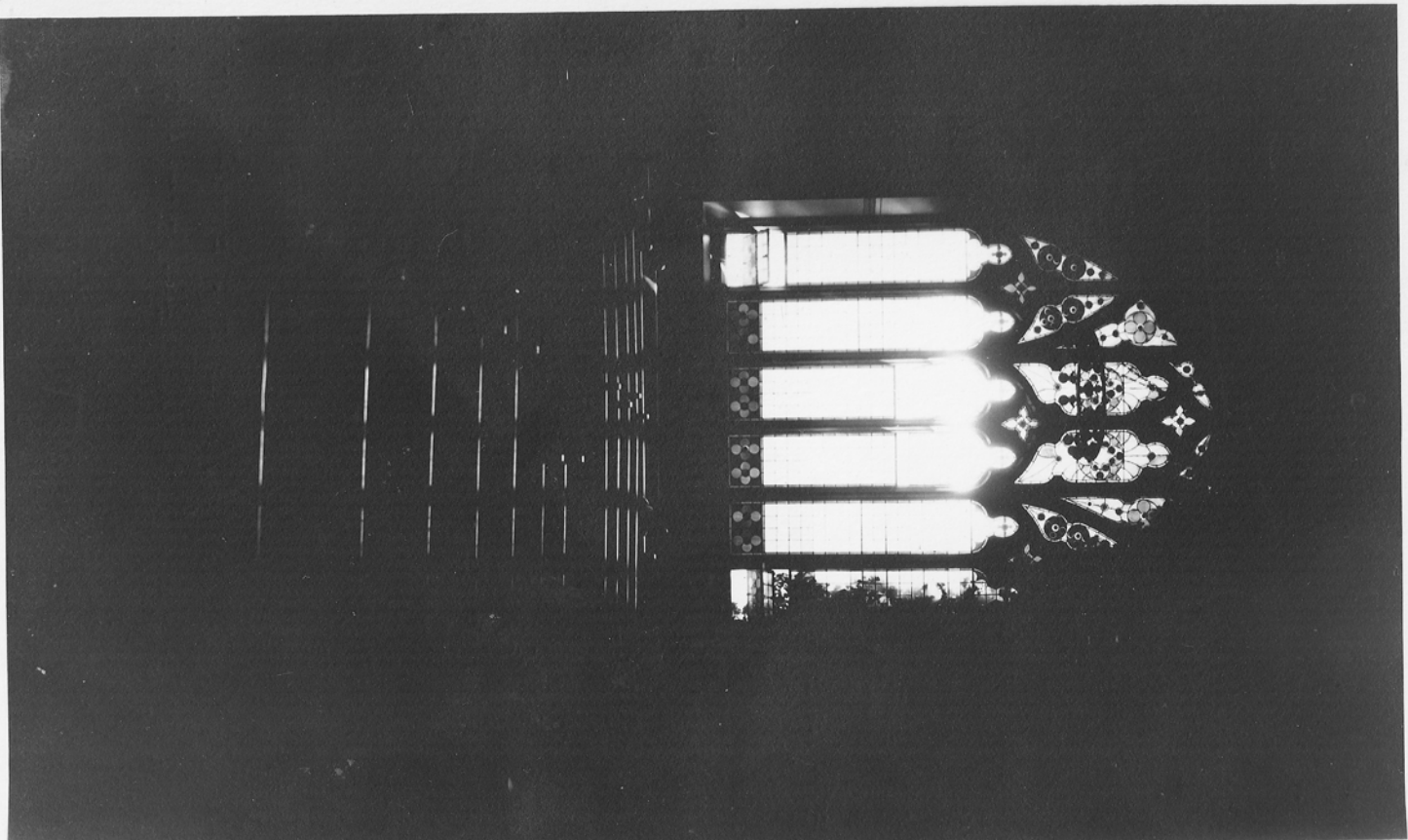




09-Pre1947 From Paris#2C9B8.jpg



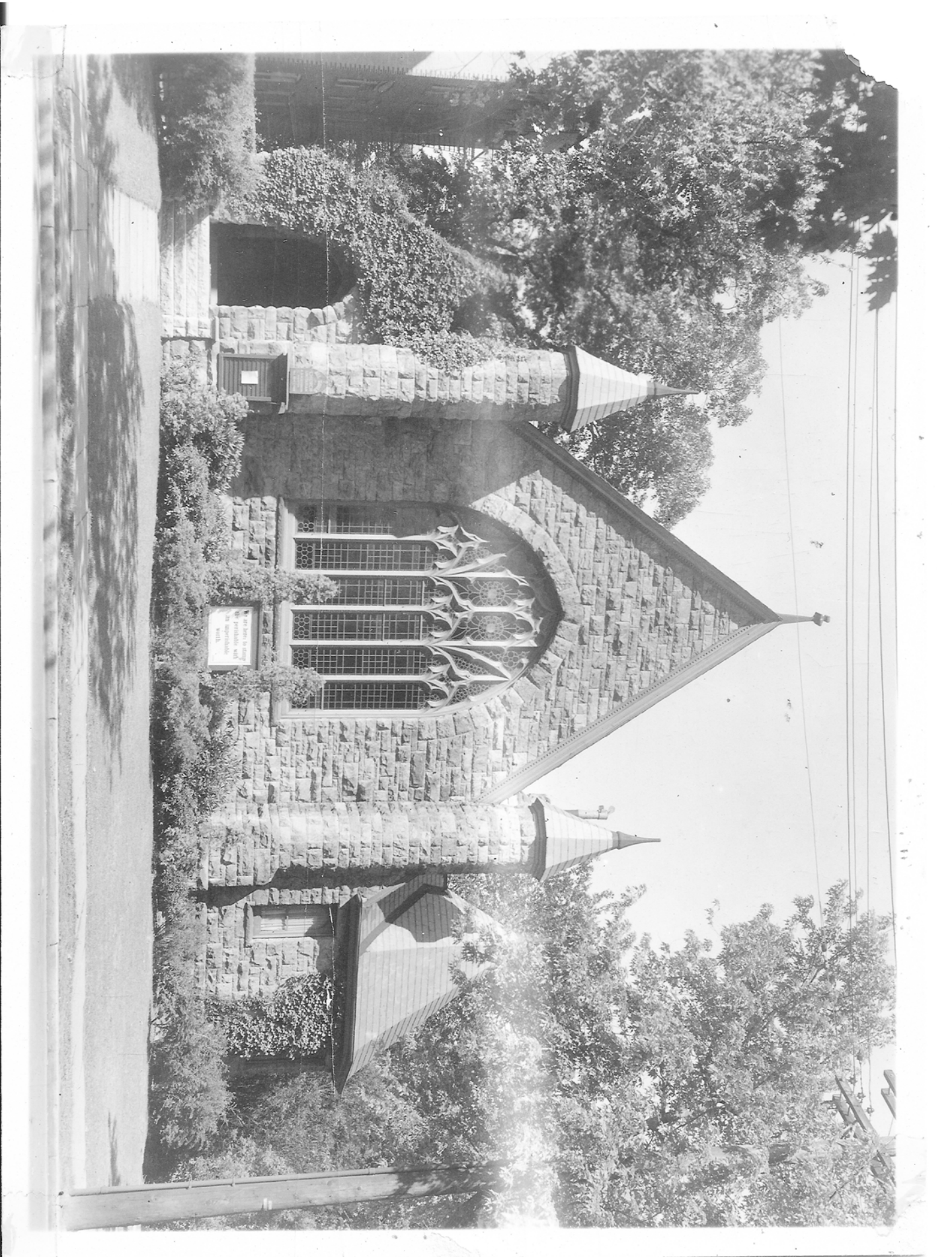
10-Pre1947 North Chur#2C9B9.jpg



11-Pre1947 Teale Window.jpg



12-1947 Church East C9BD.jpg



13-1947 Park Avenue.jpg

14-1980 North Porch a#2C9B5.jpg

